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FARM FAMILY OUTLOOK

A radio talk by Mary Rokahr, Extension Economist, U. S. Department of Agriculture, broadcast Wednesday, November 4, 1936, in the home demonstration program, National Farm and Home Hour by 51 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

As Ruth Van Deman mentioned to you last week, we have been having the Outlook Conference here in Washington for the purpose of helping you keep up-to-date on economic facts that will help you in next year's farm family plans.

Extension workers from 44 States brought in a report of conditions in their States. Specialists here in Washington had collected information on the national situation. Farm family problems were talked over from many angles, and soon you will be able to get these economic facts at extension meetings.

Your husbands have had this agricultural outlook service for many years. They have used it in deciding what crops and livestock to raise the next year. Now, you can look forward to having similar economic information that will help you with your farm family planning.

Your first question probably is: "What do you mean by farm family Outlook?" Sometime between now and the first of the year, you will be going over in your mind what big changes may occur in your living next year. Will you have more or less income? Will you grow a larger garden? Maybe! You need a new winter coat. Will clothes be likely to cost more next year? And many other questions flash through your mind. Helping you answer these questions by providing you with economic information is what we call farm family outlook.

Well, I am not going to attempt to answer these questions for you today. There is going to be another talk on the farm family outlook next week. Today, I am going to give you some of the interesting items that the State people brought to the conference.

First of all, about household accounts. Now, I know many of you think that household accounts are hard to keep but it is impossible to plan family living on a farm, or anywhere else, unless you have definite financial records to base it on. Again and again in these conference discussions, we kept going back to household accounts.

Ruth Freeman, whom many of you out in Illinois know, told us about 84 farm families who have been keeping family records for the last four years. These families have found how much the value of their living has increased. The records show that cash as well as food furnished by the farm was \$1,399 in 1932 and \$1,849 in 1935. They had a definite record of their progress.

Gladys Stratton of Connecticut reported that account keepers in her State last year had figures that showed the average cost of food per person, per day. For example, for a family of two it was 42 cents and for six or more it was 31 cents. These figures were based on cash expenditures for food and a retail value for home produced food.

The household accounts also helped to show whether it pays to raise a garden. If you live in the South the reports indicated, it pays you to have a year round garden, to raise chickens, have a cow, and produce as much as possible for home use. If you live in one of the New England States, or if your husband is growing a crop of high cash value, then it becomes a debatable question whether to use this land in a garden. This kind of question is often best threshed out in family council.

Your husband may say that he can bring in a greater cash income from the half acre that you devote to a garden by raising a cash crop. You, on the other hand, can call his attention to the better vegetables that you can have if you grow them yourself, and the fact that the variety will make for better health of your family. Someone has to take care of the garden. Who will it be? Such points can be brought out in a family discussion.

Hazel Stiebeling of the Bureau of Home Economics told us that home account records show us how close farm families come to having food necessary for good nutrition. With an interesting chart based on records from over 500 farm families collected for the last 15 years, she pointed out that when the value of food ran below \$65 per person, per year, about one-half of the families had what she called "B" diets. This "B" diet comes very near the margin of safety in nutrition. In this same group 1/4 of the families were living on "C" diets which entirely failed to meet the average minimum requirements for good health. Only when some of these families spent \$150 or more per person for food, did they get an "A" diet, which gives a wide margin of safety from the standpoint of nutrition.

Household accounts cropped up again when the home management specialists told about the interest farm women are taking in choosing household equipment. Many Kansas homemakers, Mrs. Goodman reported, purchased new cook stoves and refrigerators in 1935. Some money was spent on the improvement of the house, especially on wall paper and paint. The weekly washing is going to go easier this next year because of the washing machines that were purchased during 1935.

Willie Vie Dowdy of Georgia, said that the Georgia farm homemakers were using the slogan: "Saving for a purpose." And Edna Cobb of Maine, said that a study of home accounts showed that you must plan on at least one major purchase every year. It might be a new automobile, a stove, a refrigerator, or a new roof. In some farm families it was the college education for one of the children.

Farm and home inventory campaigns are to be held in Tennessee and Kansas this year. Mrs. Speer and Miss Sherrod, who represented those States, said that farm families found it was a good practice to go over the equipment and supplies that were on hand for family living and the farm business at least once a year. Next year's purchases could then be planned with greater satisfaction to all.

Fra Clark, who comes from Missouri, described how husbands and wives are working out their next year's family needs and listing them in a family budget book. When they see in black and white that they allocated \$50 for tobacco and the same amount for insurance, they go over their plans and make revisions. Fra Clark says that after the family budget book is completed the family wants to keep accounts to see how closely their plans are realized.

By-the-way, if any of you want to start your family on better family financial planning there is a Farm Family Account Book, which has been worked out

by the Bureau of Home Economics and the Extension Service staffs. You can get a copy by sending to the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. It costs 15 cents.

Those who are on the program-planning committees of your clubs will be interested in this idea that was worked out for the Outlook Conference. Mr. Montgomery of the Consumers Counsel asked ten government officials, representing such organizations as the Food & Drug Administration, The National Bureau of Standards, and the Federal Trade Commission, to come to the Outlook Conference and tell us how these agencies were helping to protect the consumer. Mr. Montgomery asked these officials questions about their services and we were all delighted with this informal method of getting first-hand information. There were no set speeches.

As I said a moment ago, you might try this method, as well as the panel discussion at some of your home demonstration meetings this winter. In the panel conference, as you know, six or seven people are asked to sit around the table, facing the audience, and in a general conversation present their points of view on a certain subject. We used this method in discussing the future of consumers' cooperatives and found it clarified many of our ideas on their place in rural areas.

In the Farm Family Outlook Conference we also learned something about the international situation through a similar panel discussion on trade agreements. (When I was in the West this summer, I heard a lot about the trade agreements we had entered into with Canada, on livestock. Representatives of the Canadian government were in attendance at the conference and so we exchanged ideas.) You know, I am always surprised at the wide variety of information that the farm homemaker needs to know. Such information goes far beyond her community, her State, and even the United States, into foreign countries. This winter at some of your meetings, no doubt, you will be discussing agriculture as it is affected by international situations and so the State representatives who attended the Outlook Conference will be ready to give you some first-hand information. So much for a very brief and inadequate report of the Outlook Conference.

Now you and your husband may find time in December, January, or February, to sit down some stormy evening and work on a plan for your farm and home for 1937. When you do it, remember to ask your county home demonstration agent for all the help she can give you on what the farm family outlook will be for your State. And remember there will be meetings on the outlook during the next few months. Outlook meetings are a grand place to exchange ideas with other homemakers in your community.

If you are moved to get your plans down in black and white, and keep account do not forget that there is that Farm Family Account Book available for 15 cents from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

And if you are interested in a fuller report on the Outlook, that will come to you next week in a talk by Rowena Schmidt Carpenter of the Bureau of Home Economics.

